



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Grand Teton  
National Park

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## Grand Teton National Park News Release

### Overdue Skier in Granite Canyon Prompted Start of Search Effort

Local Jackson resident, Ernst Forst, age 49, was reported to be overdue from a backcountry ski trip into Granite Canyon on Wednesday evening, January 25. After one of Forst's skiing companions called the Teton Interagency Dispatch Center at 7:15 p.m. to report the overdue skier, rangers began coordinating a search effort with Teton County Search and Rescue staff. Just before the Teton County contract helicopter was launched to begin an aerial search on Thursday morning, January 26, rangers learned that Forst had been located by three of his friends who skied back into the canyon during early morning hours to find him. The search was subsequently called off.

Forst was part of a group of ten skiers who traveled into Granite Canyon by an access route from the Jackson Hole Mountain Resort on Wednesday afternoon. The group intended to ski in the upper Granite Canyon area and return to Teton Village at day's end. Around 2:30 p.m., Forst decided to leave the larger group and pursue a different route out of the canyon. In the process of crossing Granite Creek, Forst fell through a snow bridge over the creek, broke a ski pole, and ended up getting his boots and lower legs soaked with the icy water. By 4 p.m., Forst knew he was losing daylight and needed to prepare for a self rescue. He made his way to one of the park's backcountry cabins and was able to gain access inside. He then proceeded to warm himself and dry out his clothing and ski skins. As a safety precaution, he also made the decision to wait until dawn before attempting to ski out. Forst was prepared for his backcountry trip and carried an emergency blanket, head lamp, extra water, high energy bars, and other food items.

After Forst's skiing companions reported that he was overdue, park rangers began packing a trail during Wednesday night from the Granite Canyon parking area into the mouth of the canyon for rescue skiers to use the next morning. At first light, rangers coordinated with the contract helicopter and personnel from Teton County Search and Rescue to begin rescue operations.

Three of Forst's ski companions, Mike McBride, Kent McBride and John Kuzloski, packed some outdoor equipment – tents, jackets, snow pants, a stove, and Motorola radios – and began their own search by skiing back into Granite Canyon at 1 a.m. on Thursday morning. They located Forst at the park's backcountry cabin around 5:20 a.m. and attempted to make radio contact with other friends. Park rangers called off the search after being notified at 7 a.m. that Forst had been found uninjured and okay, and that the group was skiing out.

Forst has reportedly skied in Granite Canyon multiple times throughout the past several years. Rangers credit him for being prepared with emergency gear and for making decisions that kept him safe. Rangers also caution that groups using the backcountry in winter should remain together and wait for companions who may lag behind.

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